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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000662

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SUBJECT: PART 3 OF 3: SCENESETTER FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S APRIL
22 NATIONAL ELECTION

REF: A. PRETORIA 000543
[1](#)B. PRETORIA 000544

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR RAYMOND L. BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) This cable is part 3 of 3 on the South African
election. End Summary.

Important Political Markers to Watch

[1](#)2. (C) There are at least five political markers for this
election:

-- The possibility of violence will be a marker. There
already have been incidents of violence between the ANC and
COPE and between the ANC and the IFP. Most political leaders
admit that there have been incidents of political
intimidation at rallies and speeches, but say that violence
will not be a major issue either before or after the poll
because of the strength and independence of the IEC. All
political parties have signed a code of conduct that they
must follow to participate in the election, and since
agreeing to the code there has been a noticeable decrease in
the amount of angry rhetoric from party leaders. Violence is
always a possibility in a country with as many competing
interests as there are in South Africa, but the SAG has
worked hard since 1994 to move the nation away from its
violent past. University of South Africa professor Dirk
Kotze noted that the IEC already is working with parties in
liaison relationships to settle election disputes before they
start. He said, "Parties have met with the IEC numerous
times in recent months to lodge complaints and to work for
solutions so there will be no surprises on April 22 or
thereafter."

-- Voter turnout will be a marker. The ANC has increased its
electoral dominance in every election since 1994. However, a
closer study of turnout among eligible voters over time shows
a different story. While the number of eligible voters
increased by around 5 million between 1994 to 2004 due to
population growth, the number of IEC registered voters did
not grow. Millions of potential voters did not register.
Moreover, the number of ballots cast actually decreased.

Thus, in spite of the ANC's increasing electoral margins from 63 to 69 percent, the size of the eligible voting population actually voting for the ruling party has not increased or even remained static in proportion to population growth. The ANC's core support actually decreased from 53 to 39 percent of South Africa's eligible voting population. Political commentators say that turnout among certain social groups, such as young voters, could fundamentally shift voting patterns. The 2008 Labor Force Survey estimates that 18 to 29 year olds constitute a massive 23 percent of the population. The IEC acknowledged recently that registration levels among this segment of the population have risen dramatically.

-- Provincial results will provide a marker for the 2011 local election. The poll two years from now will in many ways be just as important in determining the future landscape of South African politics as this ballot. Results in Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, and Northern Cape will be important indicators for how the 2011 election will shape up. Results in Western Cape and Limpopo especially will prove critical to projecting the electoral future.

-- Whether the ANC achieves a two-thirds majority in Q-- Whether the ANC achieves a two-thirds majority in Parliament also will be a marker. The ANC remains the dominant player in South African politics until proven otherwise and, in many ways, this marker is what the 2009 election is about. If the ANC fails to win a two-thirds majority, it would be a severe psychological blow to the ruling party and to Zuma himself. Moreover, without a two-thirds majority, the ANC would have to compromise on legislation in Parliament to gain approval (to implement changes such as constitutional amendments). Beyond being a psychological blow and potential hindrance to passing some

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legislation, there are few immediate implications for the ANC not winning a two-thirds majority.

-- Patronage and the power of incumbency will be a marker. Patronage is a marker because there are credible reports that the ANC, on the local level, has used party resources to provide grants and food for hard-pressed voters. Yet, Post has seen no indication of the ANC leadership using public funds to direct election-related benefits such as food-for-votes schemes. There are anecdotal reports that the ANC is focusing on areas it has ignored during the past five years to boost its votes in certain areas, but there is no evidence that the party is using state resources for election-related corruption. Power of incumbency is key because the ANC is using state resources for its campaign. The party used a national helicopter to carry Motlanthe into East London for the ANC's party manifesto launch. The party also encouraged Mandela to attend a campaign rally in Eastern Cape along with Zuma to show voters that the legendary ANC leader still supports his ideological home. Mandela's appearance was controversial, but demonstrates how the ANC uses its historical place as a liberation movement to attract voters. Moreover, the ANC is using its power to lure COPE members back to the party with offers of jobs and positions in government, according to local press reports.

Election Observing

13. (C) The U.S. Mission in South Africa will have the largest, and one of the only, electoral observing missions for this election. U.S. officers and South African nationals working for the Mission will visit every province, every provincial capital, and roughly 200 polling stations in the country beginning April 21 and ending on April 23. There will be more than 135 officers participating in the observing effort.

Comment

14. (C) This election, one of the most important since 1994, will begin to answer whether COPE is a viable opposition, whether the ANC will hold onto governing the Western Cape, whether the IFP will remain relevant in KwaZulu Natal, and whether the tripartite alliance's staunch support of Jacob Zuma will be vindicated with a resounding victory -- and a two-thirds majority in Parliament. This election will demonstrate where this country is after 15 years of democracy. What this election will not do is help definitely answer questions about where this country is headed in the future. If the ANC President can govern successfully for a full presidential term in the face of wide-ranging corruption charges, if the ANC will drastically overhaul Mbeki's policies, and if Zuma and his ANC will soften the party's stance in support of fellow liberation movements will be answered over time, but not right away.

LA LIME